

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Previously presented): A package for retaining a needle-suture combination, the package comprising:

a molded base portion;

a molded cover portion, the cover portion being integrally connected to the base portion via a hinge, wherein at least one of the base portion and the cover portion is configured and adapted to retain a suture of a needle-suture combination; and

a needle park disposed on at least one of the base portion and the cover portion, the needle park being configured and adapted to retain a needle of the needle-suture combination therein.

Claim 2 (Previously presented): The package according to claim 1, wherein the hinge integrally interconnects the base portion with the cover portion.

Claim 3 (Previously presented): The package according to claim 2, wherein the hinge is a living hinge.

Claim 4 (Previously presented): The package according to claim 1, wherein the base portion and the cover portion are correspondingly shaped.

Claim 5 (Previously presented): The package according to claim 4, wherein the base portion and the cover portion are ovular in shape.

Claim 6 (Previously presented): The package according to claim 2, wherein at least one of the base portion and the cover portion includes at least one rail integrally formed therewith and defining a suture race around the circumference of the package.

Claim 7 (Previously presented): The package according to claim 2, wherein at least one of the base portion and the cover portion includes at least one aperture formed therein for passage of the suture of the needle-suture combination therethrough.

Claim 8 (Previously presented): The package according to claim 1, wherein the base portion and the cover portion are formed from plastic.

Claim 9 (Previously presented): A package for retaining a needle-suture combination, the package comprising:

 a base portion having:

 a bottom wall;

 an outer perimetral wall extending therearound;

 a rail provided on the bottom wall and extending substantially therearound, the rail and the outer perimetral wall defining a race therebetween; and

 an aperture formed in the bottom wall for passage of a suture retained in the

suture race from the package; and

a cover connected to the base portion via a hinge.

Claim 10 (Previously presented): The package of claim 9, wherein the hinge is a living hinge.

Claim 11 (Previously presented): The package of claim 9, the rail is provided with at least one opening formed along the length thereof.

Claim 12 (Previously presented): The package of claim 9, wherein the outer perimeteral wall includes at least one tab extending therefrom and configured and dimensioned to selectively engage an edge of the cover.

Claim 13 (Previously presented): The package of claim 11, further including a suture wound around the rail and within the suture race, the suture including a distal end extending through the at least one opening in the rail and through the aperture in the bottom wall.

Claim 14 (Previously presented): The package of claim 9, wherein the package is formed of plastic.

Claim 15 (Previously presented): The package of claim 9, further including a lubricious material provided in the suture race.

Claim 16 (Previously presented): The package of claim 9, further includes at least one needle park formed in the bottom wall of the base portion, the needle park being configured and adapted to retain a needle therein.

Claim 17 (Previously presented): A method of loading a package for retaining a needle-suture combination, the method including the steps of:

providing a package for retaining a needle-suture combination, the package including:

- a molded base portion having a hinge-side edge and a free edge;
- a molded cover portion having a hinge-side edge and a free edge, the cover portion being integrally connected to the base portion along the hinge-side edges; and
- a needle park disposed on at least one of the base portion and the cover portion, the needle park being configured and adapted to retain a needle of the needle-suture combination therein;

loading the package with a suture of the needle-suture combination; and

approximating the free edges of the base portion and the cover portion toward one another.

Claim 18 (Previously presented): The method according to claim 17, wherein the free ends of the base portion and the cover portion are snappingly engagable with one another.